

**COMMITTEE : NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL AREA  
COUNCIL**

**DATE: 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

**Petition seeking the Creation of Community Woodland on land  
between Shielfield Terrace & Prior Road, Berwick upon Tweed**

**Report of:** Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Colin Horncastle, Looking after our Environment

**1. Purpose of report**

To respond to the e-petition which closed on 14th February 2024 with 247 signatures regarding the request from Berwick Town Council to enter into partnership arrangements or community asset transfer in respect of a wooded area of land between the rear of Prior Road and Shielfield Terrace in Berwick upon Tweed to enable the creation of a community woodland, providing recreational space and allowing the issues of litter, antisocial behaviour and associated rodent infestations to be addressed.

**2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Local Area Committee note the content of this report and support the actions proposed.

**3. Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2023-26:

‘Thriving Places and Culture – Neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained’

**4. Key issues**

The wooded area of land in question currently forms a relatively dense landscaped tree/shrub belt along part of Shielfield Terrace screening the rear gardens of residential properties along part of Prior Road (no. 2 to 64) from traffic on the B6354 Shielfield Terrace. It is designated as Highway Improvement Land but is not required for any further highway improvement activity and is non-operational land.

The County Council has recently adopted an Environment Policy Statement that strengthens its commitment to maintaining protecting and enhancing the environment. Ensuring that local communities have access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces is a key commitment of the policy statement.

The County Council welcomes in principle the proposal for the community asset transfer of the wooded area to Berwick Town Council to facilitate the creation of a ‘pocket park’ that would improve access to green space and recreational

opportunities for local residents, whilst also helping to tackle issues around littering and flytipping.

The petition response demonstrates strong local support for the proposed creation of a pocket park. However, it is important that the residents of the residential properties whose gardens directly adjoin the wooded area are actively consulted on the proposals, so that they have a clear understanding of what changes would be made to the area and have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals that can be considered as part of the community asset transfer process.

## **5. Background**

### **The Petition**

The County Council has received a 247-name petition in support of the following.

*Residents and Town Councillors, mindful of the maintenance issues of the wooded area between the rear of Prior Road and Shielfield Terrace, would request NCC to enter into partnership arrangements or transfer the unused land to enable a community woodland to be created, provided recreational space and allowing the issues of litter, antisocial behaviour and associated rodent infestations to be addressed.*

The wooded area is not a recognised Green Space and its classification is Highway Improvement Land. It runs for ~240 metres alongside part of the B6354 Shielfield Terrace in Berwick upon Tweed. It is not required for any further highway improvement activity.

The wooded area currently forms a relatively dense landscaped tree/shrub belt along part of Shielfield Terrace screening the rear gardens of residential properties along part of Prior Road (no. 2 to 64) from traffic on Shielfield Terrace.

The management of the area is currently undertaken by NCC's Countryside team with maintenance tasks undertaken by the local Neighbourhood Services teams as required. NCC have on request from both residents and the local County Councillor actioned works to the area particularly to address storm damage and also to clear fly tipping.

NCC has sought to encourage local residents to form a group to take an active interest in the wooded area, as in other areas of the Town, and to action minor works to the area with the help of NCC to address concerns of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. This approach has not been sustainable and as such there is no longer a residents group involved in the maintenance of the wooded area.

Image 1 - Wooded Land Between Shielfield Terrace and Prior Road, Berwick upon Tweed



Image from Google Streetview

Berwick Town Council has expressed an interest in taking on responsibility for the maintenance of the wooded area either through a licence agreement or via community asset transfer so that they could create a 'pocket park' to improve accessibility and access to 'green space' for local residents, as well as helping to address local concerns over littering and flytipping in the wooded area. The local County Councillor Isabel Hunter is supportive of this proposal.

NCC is supportive in principle of the request from Berwick Town Council to consider a community asset transfer of this non-operational land alongside the highway to facilitate the creation of a 'pocket park' improving access to green space for local residents. This would involve Berwick Town Council taking on the on-going maintenance responsibility for the wooded area and for the creation and maintenance of any paths / seating etc to help facilitate improved public access.

The petition has demonstrated strong support for the proposal from the local community. However, it is also considered necessary to demonstrate that the majority of residents on Prior Road whose rear gardens directly back onto the wooded landscaped area are also supportive of the creation of a pocket park, as this

would entail removal /thinning out some of the vegetation, creation of paths and opening up the area for public access. This could raise some concerns from residents over security and loss of privacy issues, increased noise and loss of screening from Shielfield Terrace, which would need to be considered as part of any community asset transfer process.

### **Proposed Actions**

It is proposed that the County Council confirms to Berwick Town Council that it is supportive in principle of the proposed community asset transfer of the wooded area of land at Sheilfield Terrace to the Town Council for the creation of a 'pocket park' to provide improved access to green space for residents.

The County Council advises Berwick Town Council that it should undertake direct consultation with residents on Prior Road whose properties adjoin the wooded area. The consultation should outline the proposed plans for the creation of a pocket park and what changes would be made to the wooded area to facilitate this, and to seek their feedback on whether they support this proposal.

Berwick Town Council should submit a formal application to NCC for the community asset transfer of the land for the creation of a pocket park, and to include details of the outcome of the aforementioned consultation exercise along with the petition response to confirm the proposal has support from those residents whose homes adjoin the area as well as from the wider community.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	The Council has recently adopted a new Environment Policy Statement that strengthens its commitment to maintaining protecting and enhancing the environment. Ensuring that local communities have access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces is a key commitment within the Environment Policy and the Council will continue to work with partners to ensure that community are involved in decision making. The County Council therefore in principle is supportive of this petition request and welcomes a formal community asset transfer application from Berwick Town Council.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The area is currently maintained by NCC and is non-operational land alongside the highway. Transfer to Berwick Town Council would entail the transfer of maintenance responsibility, offering a small productivity benefit for NCC enabling grounds maintenance teams to be engaged on other duties in the area.
<b>Legal</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Procurement</b>	None.
<b>Human Resources</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Property</b>	The site is owned and managed by the County Council.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)	The provision of a pocket park would improve access to green space, and any new paths should accommodate accessibility requirements.

No	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	None.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	Increased community involvement and engagement in the development of a 'pocket park' should help to mitigate risks associated with flytipping and antisocial behaviour (ASB). The design/layout of any changes to the landscaping and provision of paths should seek to design-out potential anti-social behaviour issues where possible (such as clear sight lines). NCC will continue to work closely with partners organisations and Northumbria Police to mitigate this risk and address any ASB.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The requirement to undertake a direct consultation exercise with those residents of Prior Road whose gardens directly adjoin the wooded area will ensure that there is a clear understanding of what is being proposed and for residents to have an opportunity to provide feedback which will be considered as part of the community asset transfer process.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None.
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Improving access to green space for informal recreation and active community involvement in the maintenance of their local environment can both have significant health and wellbeing benefits.
<b>Wards</b>	Berwick West with Ord

**Background papers:**

None.

**Report sign off:**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	n/a
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	n/a
Relevant Executive Director	
Chief Executive	n/a
Portfolio Holder(s)	Colin Horncastle

**Author and Contact Details**

Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport  
 Email: [paul.jones01@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:paul.jones01@northumberland.gov.uk)

Neil Dawson, Countryside and Green Spaces Manager  
 Email: [neil.dawson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:neil.dawson@northumberland.gov.uk)